

# LATIN NOTES

*Published by the SERVICE BUREAU FOR CLASSICAL TEACHERS maintained at Teachers College, New York City, by the AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE. Eight Issues, October to May.*

*Price of Subscription, \$1.00 with Membership in the LEAGUE*

Entered as second class matter March 20, 1924 at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Address communications to FRANCES E. SABIN, Director of the Bureau

Issued in the interests of the teachers of Secondary Latin and Greek

Vol. VI

November, 1928

No. 2

## MAKING LATIN INTERESTING

### ARTICLE II

In the former article on this subject in the May issue of *LATIN NOTES*, the topics discussed were motivation and subject matter. There remain for consideration two topics:

- I. The mental attitude of the teacher
- II. The method of recitation

To the first of these it is impossible to attach too much importance. It is by far the most potent factor in the success or the failure of both teacher and pupil. No substitute can be found for a friendly, cheerful, positive, confident, and constructive state of mind on the part of the teacher, and nothing will atone for its absence. There is no antidote against indifference, faintheartedness, or dubiety. The teacher who goes into the classroom without interest in the work, without belief in the value of the subject, without confidence in his or her ability to succeed, or without faith in the innate ability of the pupil to grow into the power to do what is desired, is to that extent a failure to start with; and no amount of artificial stimulants by way of refined methods will be sufficiently miraculous to culminate in success. On the other hand, the teacher who enters the classroom with glow of enthusiasm, feeling that he has a worth-while work to do, and realizing that there is always a way to accomplishment, has already laid the foundations of a sure and abiding success. Indifference, laziness, even lodged dislike, or subnormality on the part of the pupil cannot resist such a positive constructive, creative force.

Cheerfulness, friendliness, confidence, and enthusiasm are vitalizing forces everywhere in life—more contagious than measles, more infectious than influenza, and never more so than in a class of young people which “thinks by infection, for the most part, catching an idea as it catches a cold.” In almost any school you may enter the one classroom and find the whole atmosphere alive, vibrant. Everybody is awake, active, and interested. There is perfect order. The faces of pupils and teacher reveal happy absorption, and you say, “What an unusually bright class!” Follow the same class through the day and you will be likely to find them either dull and listless, or positively disorderly in some other classroom. The difference consists in the different spirit of the teacher.

The chief qualities essential to a success-making mental attitude on the part of the teacher are:

- I. Good humor, or cheerfulness
- II. Sociability, friendliness, or humaneness
- III. Faith in her own ability to make a success of the work
- IV. Faith in the ability of the child to succeed.
- V. Patient, kindly insistence

Good humor is power, both physical and mental. The knowledge that cheerfulness renders people more clear brained and less subject to fatigue is no new thing, but it has remained for our modern psychologists to reveal the fact that cheerfulness as an emotion operates through the glandular system in the generation of secretions that tend to vitalize both body and brain, and to stimulate mental activity. When that cheerfulness is associated directly with the subject in hand, no matter how difficult it may be, a natural interest is developed, enthusiasm for it is a natural consequence, and success is inevitable.

In this connection the story of a problem case may be of interest. A high school girl slightly over age, had been a problem case for three years. She was gloomy, despondent, and subject to headaches, yet was without any apparent physical ailment. She had been under the care of physicians and psychiatrists, but without any improvement in her condition, and as a result had failed in much of her work. During her seventh term in high school a sudden change took place in her mental condition and in her work. Her own explanation of the change was to the following effect. At the beginning of the term she came to school each morning, as usual, suffering from headache and depression, but soon after she went to her first recitation these symptoms disappeared. This happened day after day. The girl's work improved in all her subjects, and she made a success of her high school work from that time on. She had had the good fortune to have as her teacher the first period of the day one who expressed cheer and confidence, and an unquestionable interest in the subject. The girl said: “This teacher seems to have an effect on my mind. I go to the class with a headache and in a few minutes it is all gone.” The teacher undoubtedly did exercise an effect on her mind. The spirit of pleasurable interest in the work in hand stimulated in her healthful emotional activity, which converted dullness into successful activity.

The writer's experience of six years in teaching so-called subnormal pupils in high school has convinced him that many of the cases of dullness are due almost entirely to a lack of happy, healthy emotional interest. The number of our pupils who have little in their lives to stimulate a healthful emotional life is not small. For such it is pure waste to attempt to give intellectual training, unless accompanied by well-directed education of the emotional nature.

The spirit of cheer in the classroom, however, must be definitely directed if it is to lead to success. It is perfectly possible to entertain or amuse a class without accomplishing anything worthwhile. To be genuinely effective as regards educational ends the spirit of cheerfulness must be connected directly with the subject in hand and must lead directly to an interest in the personal welfare of the pupil. As soon as the members

of a class learn that it is possible to enjoy hard work in Latin and that the teacher is genuinely interested in their welfare, a very great part of the difficulty in teaching the subject has been overcome. The confidence of the pupil that he can look upon his teacher as a reliable friend and adviser, is an unfailing asset. But more than this, the possession of a genuine human interest renders the teacher more observant of the needs of individual pupils and at the same time much more capable of meeting those needs in the right way.

One easy means of promoting a spirit of friendliness between teacher and pupil and one that is associated directly with the work in hand is conversational Latin. At the beginning of the term pupils are allowed to choose Roman names, by which they are called in the classroom. Gradually they are taught conversational Latin, which many of them use on all occasions. Upon entering the classroom they greet the teacher in Latin:

"Salvē, ō magister," and receive an answer accordingly.

"Et tū salvē, Lūci" (Marce, Iūlia, or Flāvia).

Frequently a brief conversation may result.

"Septime, parāvistine pēsum cum cūrā?"

"Certē, ō magister, tōtam hōram huic pēnsō studui; est difficillimum."

"Labor omnia vincit, Septime."

Or it may be:

"Quid fecisti heri, Mārcia?"

"In hortis botānicis ambulāvi, ō magister."

"Ambulāvistine cum frātre."

"Minimē, ō magister; cum amicis."

"Et tū, Iulī, quid egisti, heri?"

"Cum sociis, ō magister, ii ad Oceanum, ubi nātāvimus."

"Nōne in Oceanō nāvigāvistī?"

"Minimē, nōn permittitur ut cum sociis nāvigem."

The genuine interest in the pupil's welfare has to be shown in entirely different ways, of which there are many. So let it be known to the class that, although conscientious effort is expected, none should worry over difficulties, but should come for advice, and assistance if necessary, is a step toward confidence. The teacher should always make it plain to a class that an excessive amount of time is not to be given to a lesson, if through haste too long an assignment has been made, and that pupils are not, in such a case, to neglect other subjects or forego needed recreation. Interest shown in the plans and ambitions of pupils for their future repays many fold. Pupils become more dependable and more conscientious under such a teacher. Even the naturally indifferent pupil becomes ashamed to confront a teacher of this kind with an unprepared lesson.

But this is not all that is demanded of the teacher who would be a real success. There is still another essential of the victorious mental attitude. Faith, or confidence, must be a part of the teacher's equipment—faith in herself, in her courage, and in her ability, and faith in the innate ability of the pupil to absorb knowledge and to unfold power. This is particularly necessary in dealing with the slower groups. The bright ones could get along very well without the confidence of the teacher, if need be, because they naturally have confidence in themselves. *But the slow, the timid, the poorly prepared, the indifferent, the lazy can recover themselves and thrive only under the stimulating confidence of a teacher in whom they in turn have confidence.*

The principal cause of failure in a large part of the slower groups is habitual lack of self-confidence, the state of mind that gives up readily and says, "I can't." The teacher who undertakes the instruction of such

pupils with any feeling other than a firm belief that she can inspire confidence in them and lead them to do the thing that is asked of them, is certainly not on the high road to success. There are several attitudes that are deadly in their effect on a class of this type. One of these is a feeling of pity or condescension, expressed all too frequently in such words as, "Poor things, I feel sorry for them! I'll do my best for them." Another failure producing attitude is that of helplessness on the part of the teacher who says, "I don't know what I am going to do; I am completely discouraged; they don't seem to know anything." Still another is the feeling expressed in the statement: "They ought not to be studying Latin anyway!" Teachers of the foregoing types as well as those who are impatient of slowness or unsympathetic toward weakness are not capable of inspiring the confidence necessary to successful attainment with retarded pupils. However, most teachers suffering from lack of confidence are perfectly capable of overcoming the deficiency if they desire to do so. Faith can be developed, in teaching as well as in religion or business. It is a psychological problem.

One of the most pernicious ideas that has come into our educational discussions during recent years is the notion that a pupil should not take Latin, or any other subject, unless he can do it with a fair degree of excellence and without marked struggle on his part or that of the teacher. The truth is, that the pupil who acquires Latin easily is merely making use of powers already acquired to procure information, but is neither unfolding any amount of new power, nor developing new mental processes. In other words, the bright boy or girl who is able to prepare his lesson in fifteen minutes is doing no more for his own growth and advancement than the slower one who spends a similar amount of time. The amount of growth and development in brain power cannot be measured by a fixed standard of excellence in any subject. Pupils are miles apart in mental organization, and hence in apprehension and comprehension, in observation and reasoning power. If the subject is to be of true educational value it must take them as they are and help them to increase, not simply their information, but their ability to apprehend, to reason, and to make applications. It must correct and amplify already existing mental processes and must awaken and develop new ones. If it fails to do this either in the exceptional pupil or in the slow one, it has failed of its true educational function and has not rendered to society an adequate return for the expense involved.

It is in this very respect that Latin offers an exceptional opportunity. No subject in the curriculum is better adapted for use as a means of developing clear, definite, and accurate mental processes of considerable complexity. Because of the gradual increase in difficulty, no subject of real value as a developmental medium is more truly within the grasp of pupils of varying types of ability. At the same time it makes wider and more varying demands on the mental power of the pupil than is commonly supposed. It calls into play the power of observation, the ability to reason from particulars to conclusions, the ability to analyze and compose, which in turn make demands on the imagination as the power of the individual to see the truth behind the symbol and to give adequate expression to ideas either in translation from one language to the other, or in his interpretation of ancient life through the subject matter read.

There are few pupils that enter high school even under the least satisfactory conditions in the lower schools who are not capable of developing a fair degree



of ability in the use of these powers, if they do not possess them, and of greatly improving and perfecting such powers as they already possess. The great mistake that we are making is in adopting a Procrustean system in which we lop off a part of the ability of the more highly developed and try to stretch out the inability of the undeveloped to fit the length of our educational bed, which is adapted only to the pupil of medium development, a method that results in mediocrity of accomplishment or in absolute failure. If either the bright pupil or the slow one is not spoiled by the process it is not because of the system, but in spite of it.

Let us set before teachers and pupils the ideal, not of reading so many pages of Caesar or Cicero in a given term, but the notion of developing the power to do the various types of work required in Latin, independently and accurately, with understanding and discrimination; and let the amount of ground covered depend on the capacity of the pupil; then Latin will begin to perform its true function as an educational medium. Then, too, teachers will realize that there is nothing demanded that cannot confidently be expected of practically every pupil, and there will be no lack in the teaching staff of that confident mental attitude which will insure abundant success with all types of pupils.

CHARLES M. STEBBINS,  
Erasmus Hall High School, Brooklyn, N. Y..

### VERGIL IN THE THIRD YEAR?

The idea of reading Vergil with a third-year class in place of Cicero is not a new one. Doubtless many teachers have made the experiment. But the custom of having three years of prose narrative as a basis for poetry is still regarded as the only logical position. This would be far easier to support if Latin pupils in general continued their work through the fourth year. When one recalls, however, the statement in the Latin Investigation Report to the effect that only 14 out of every 100 pupils who start Latin ever reach the fourth year, the argument loses some of its validity, especially for those who consider a first-hand acquaintance with the Aeneid a priceless intellectual and spiritual possession. Moreover, the fact that this poem appeals as a rule to the interest of the third-year pupil, often leading him to continue Latin, or, if he drops the subject, leaving as it were a "better taste" in his mouth than a year spent with Roman politics and the many local allusions to the affairs of Cicero's time which are often quite beyond his grasp, is a point worthy of consideration. In the Aeneid the pupil has at least a story of adventure and (as we teachers know although the pupil may not realize it as fully as he will later) a tale which incorporates all the high ideals of the older Romans.

The two objections most frequently raised on the side of feasibility are two: first, that the poetical form will be hard for a young boy or girl to grasp, and second, that they cannot because of immaturity understand Virgil's message, comprehension of the ethical content being quite beyond their years. There is of course much to be said in support of the first point, but the teacher of experience, recalling some of Cicero's long sentences will not wholly agree that it is easier to read Cicero than Vergil, at least in a class conducted by an intelligent and sympathetic Vergil instructor. As a matter of fact all Latin is more or less incomprehensible to some pupils and Vergil's lines no more so than others through which he has toiled in reading prose authors. As regards the second point, there is also something to be said on the ground of validity. Indeed, there are plenty of adults who fail to realize the

beauty and dignity of some of the poet's standards of life and conduct. But may it not be true that under the supervision of the right teacher the young pupil may absorb much more of the poem's ethical content than is commonly supposed? With a view to testing this conclusion, a high school teacher once asked members of a third-year Vergil class (younger as a rule than those who commonly attack Cicero) to hand in at the end of the year answers to the following questions: "What is the underlying thought of the Aeneid as a whole? What message did the poet try to convey to the world?" The answers that follow are copied without change. A few of them, at any rate, would do credit to adults.

1. Vergil puts before us in the Aeneid the great glory of his fatherland which must have awakened the patriotism of the Romans. It should in the same way awaken our patriotism. Also he emphasizes the importance of religion and what a great part religion has played in the making of a nation.

BRUNELLE

2. The moral that I get from the poem is contained in the word "patriotism." If I were to put myself in the place of a Roman in the time of Vergil, that would be the first thing that would appeal to me.

ALLEN

3. It seems to me that the idea of the whole thing is one of religion and fate. With the gods' help Aeneas at last founded Rome. He also showed how the gods were present and how, if people were not good, they would be punished. Just like the war now; we are sure to lick the Kaiser and I think that fate has decreed it because ours is the right side. Although we seem to be delayed a little by something, all will probably come out well.

TAGGART

4. That all persons to do a really great thing must go through all kinds of vicissitudes and misfortunes.

BUCKINGHAM

5. Vergil was trying to show the Romans that they were descended from the noble race of the Trojans who had for a leader the son of a prominent goddess.

HARRIS

6. Be patriotic and religious.

SCOTT (eleven years old)

7. The poem deals not with the trials and triumphs of a single man but with those of all of us.

RICHARDS.

8. The poem teaches people to be good and not commit crimes. If they do, they will suffer tortures in the lower world. We see how there was evil in the Roman world as well as in ours.

STEVENS

9. The Roman people's relation to the gods—their religious standard.

GOODYEAR

10. The universal meaning of the poem is found in the loyalty of Aeneas. He always adhered to the commands of the gods and his father.

BENSBERG

11. It is a poem teaching wonderful patriotism and from it we have much to learn. It shows the weaknesses, strength, struggles, and joys of the human race.

SANBORN

12. I think it is to do your duty and not let little things interfere, for if you keep on you will eventually reach the goal.

HEAD

13. Vergil shows the strength of character of a great people in adversity. A great epic whose beauties are appreciated by all.

DWIGHT

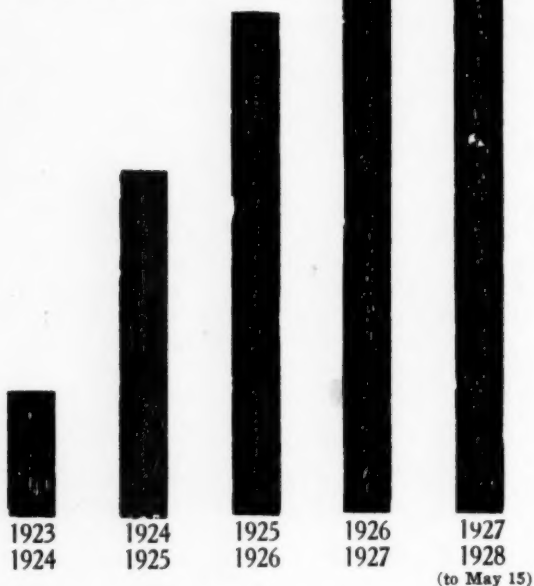
14. Key-note of the poem is setting up Aeneas as an ideal man.

CALLAN

## Relative Amounts of Material Sent Out Upon Request by The Service Bureau for Classical Teachers during the five years of its existence

1923-1924 . . .	14,657
1924-1925 . . .	44,791
1925-1926 . . .	65,331
1926-1927 . . .	95,593
1927-1928 . . .	102,653

SCALE  
1/16 inch equals 1500 items



COMMENT: That the SERVICE BUREAU FOR CLASSICAL TEACHERS is not meeting with failure on the side of its response from teachers, is shown by the illustration above, based upon the work of the five years.

### PLAYS AND PAGEANTS ON VERGILIAN THEMES

The committee on plays and pageants on Vergilian themes for the Bimillennium Vergilianum, to be celebrated in 1930, will appreciate the coöperation of Latin teachers. If you have ever written, produced, or taken part in any such production, will you not write to us and tell us of it?

LILLIAN B. LAWLER,  
University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kans.

### MATERIAL FOR DISTRIBUTION

#### I. In Mimeographed Form

*This material is lent to teachers upon payment of postage, or is sold for five cents per item unless otherwise indicated. The numbering is continued from the October issue.*

- 336. A list of Latin editions of the Bible, obtainable from American publishers.
- 337. Conundrums for the Latin Club. Prepared by Huber A. Clark, Scotch Plains, New Jersey.
- 338. Suggestions for a Latin Club. Prepared by Anabel Cathcart, Oxford, Ohio.
- 339. Bibliography of games for use in the teaching of Latin.

#### II. Latin Notes Supplements

- XXXVIII. The Project Method in the Teaching of Latin. By Mrs. Lilla Cochran, Shorewood High School, Milwaukee, Wis.
- XXXIX. Some Latinisms in English. Prepared by Dr. Casper J. Kraemer, New York University. Re-printed from THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY, Vol. XXI, No. 8, with the consent of the editor.
- XL. Suggestions for Teaching Forms and Syntax in the Earlier Years of the High School—a Symposium.

NOTE: LEAFLETS I-IV contain a list of all Service Bureau material on hand for circulation at the end of June, 1928. These will be sent out free of charge upon application.

#### BOOKS

"The Trojan Boy" by Helen Coale Crew gives a vivid picture of the Siege of Troy which pupils will read with interest. Published by the Century Company, New York. Price, \$1.75.

All teachers of secondary Latin will want to examine "Progress Tests in Latin" by Ullman and Smalley. Published by the Macmillan Company, New York. Price, 84 cents.

#### PICTURES

The manager of the Still Department of the Metro-Goldwyn Mayer Pictures, 1540 Broadway, New York City, states that the following photographs (7x9½ inches) selected from the Ben Hur moving picture production will be sent out for ten cents each. Orders should be forwarded directly to this firm. While certain details in connection with Roman life as seen in these photographs will probably displease the specialists in the classical field, it is undoubtedly true that in general the scenes are of great value to the Latin pupil.

- 271 War galley, night scene
- 244 Sea scene, showing five Roman galleys
- MPGP } Close up of a galley
- 3812 }
- 230 Messala commanding a group of Roman soldiers
- 200-704 Close up of Ben Hur
- 200-703 Close up of Ben Hur, wearing victor's wreath
- 200-584 Four-horse chariot of Ben Hur, side view
- 200-714 Destruction of Greek chariot; spina of circus in background
- 205 Messala mounted
- 200-706 Four-horse chariot of Ben Hur; slaves adjusting the harness
- 204-486 Four-horse chariot of Ben Hur; details of chariot and trapping clear
- 200-692 Race in progress, circus in background
- 200-521 Race course, with circus background
- 192 Ben Hur, his mother and sister, Messala, and group of Roman soldiers; interesting costumes

Beautiful photographs of the American Academy at Rome and the court of the Villa Aurelia (12 x 7 inches) may be secured for \$1.00 each by writing to Mr. John Gummere, William Penn Charter School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Those interested in purchasing lantern slides dealing with classical antiquity will do well to secure the catalogue of John P. Troy, Sibley College, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. Slides are sold at 45 cents each with a discount of 10 per cent if 100 are ordered.